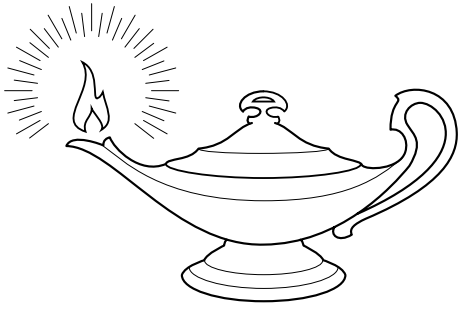




Interviewing Techniques for Gathering Community Input

a Reforma National Conference II presentation
by
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Needs Assessment Principles

- **Compile and analyze basic data about target group to build credibility.**

Demographic statistics

Agencies and services available

Community contacts or key leaders

- **Rely on the community itself for the critical information and perspective you need.**

Community gathering places

Information channels (formal and informal)

Community sources for help

- **Commit to early, active, and significant involvement by the community in the process.**

Emphasize interaction with the community

Rely on community networking

Let the community determine priorities and directions



Ideas for Identifying Community Leaders

In choosing partners, it is essential to identify those community connections **NOT** typically involved in library activities. The most valuable connections for collaborative efforts are individuals and members of groups who serve as pathways to the heart of a particular segment of the community (often referred to as gatekeepers).

Use the following list of categories of individuals and organizations to help identify those who can bring specific perspectives to the collaboration.

Note: This list is not all inclusive; selected examples are in ().

You **DO NOT** need to contact every category on the list.

You **DO** need to tailor your list to your specific effort.

You **DO** need to reach out to people not usually included.

Individuals

- ☐ home based business owners
- ☐ parents (working full time, parenting full time)
- ☐ retired people
- ☐ students (high school, community college, college, university)

Organizations

- ☐ **Businesses/ Chambers of Commerce/Visitor's Bureaus** (major employers, minority business owners, small business owners; city, county and ethnic chambers)
- ☐ **Community Services Organizations/Associations/Clubs** (AARP, AAUW, American Red Cross, B&PW, Kiwanis, Lions, Literacy Organizations, Rotary, Soroptimists, United Way)
- ☐ **Economic Development Organizations** (economic development councils, real estate brokers)
- ☐ **Educational Organizations** (community colleges, multilingual programs, PTA/PTO, school board, other libraries, private schools, home school organizations, higher education institutions/organizations)
- ☐ **Ethnic Organizations** (Asian Resources Center, Hispanic centers, Inter-tribal Council, Urban League)
- ☐ **Family Services Organizations** (Social Services Department, Family Service Agency, Jewish Family Service)

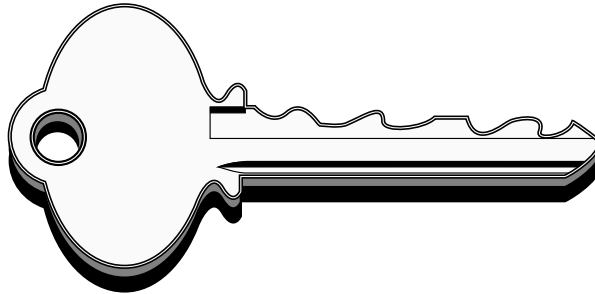
Identifying Community Leaders (page 2)

- ☐ **Financial Representatives** (bankers, credit unions, financial planners, stockbrokers)
- ☐ **Government/Political Representatives** (mayor, city council, county supervisors, city/county fiscal office, law enforcement, job training programs)
- ☐ **Health Organizations** (American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, hospitals, public health nurses, early intervention programs, public health clinics)
- ☐ **Legal Organizations** (ACLU, bar association, legal aid, NAACP Legal Defense Fund)
- ☐ **Media Representatives** (newspaper, radio, tv, ethnic media, local magazines and newsletters)
- ☐ **Miscellaneous Organizations** (arts and cultural groups, athletic groups, censorship groups, historic preservation groups, local neighborhood groups, men's groups, veterans' groups, women's groups)
- ☐ **Organizations fighting discrimination** (Anti-Defamation League, human rights group, NAACP)
- ☐ **Organizations of/for People with Disabilities** (center on deafness, council of the blind, health and human services agencies, Easter Seals, Goodwill, independent living centers, United Cerebral Palsy)
- ☐ **Organizations serving the homeless** (food closet, homeless assistance program, Salvation Army)
- ☐ **Organizations serving ex-offenders** (Department of Corrections, Friends Outside)
- ☐ **Refugee/Immigrant Centers/Services** (Catholic Social Services, refugee rights association)
- ☐ **Religious Organizations** (church organizations, ministerial association)
- ☐ **Senior Centers/Service Organizations** (Area Agency on Aging, elder abuse/care agencies, RSVP)
- ☐ **Technology Experts** (computer clubs, consultants, community colleges, Internet providers, universities)
- ☐ **Women's Centers/Service Organizations** (battered women's shelters, YWCA, NOW)
- ☐ **Youth Service Organizations** (Big Brother/Sister, Boy Scouts, child abuse agencies, recreation programs, Girl Scouts, Jr. Achievement, Head Start, Even Start, child care associations, Association for the Education of Young Children, school age care and enrichment programs)



Develop your target population profile with help from key resource groups

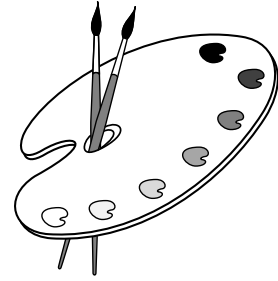
- **community organizations and businesses which have experience with your target population as recipients of their services**
- **community councils, government agencies, schools, colleges, universities, media representatives**
- **members of support systems**
- **key community leaders and any others who have experience and contacts with your target population**
- **get input by attending conferences sponsored by key organizations and meetings of coalitions**



Key Resources Needed for Data Gathering

- ◆ time, energy, financial support
- ◆ staff and/or volunteers from the target group
- ◆ staff and/or volunteers who speak the same language as members of the target group
- ◆ staff and/or volunteers trained in conducting surveys, focus groups, key informant interviews, facilitating meetings, etc.

Types of needs assessment techniques



◆ **key community leaders interviews**

- provides high quality and quantity of information
- makes it easy to clarify questions
- develops personal relationships
- incurs high cost in staff time for conducting and analyzing

◆ **focus groups**

- provides high quality and quantity of information
- makes it easy to clarify questions
- helps library staff develop rapport with community
- incurs medium cost in staff time for facilitating and analysis

◆ **community group presentation**

- provides lower quality and quantity of information
- helps library staff develop rapport with specific group
- incurs medium cost in staff time for presenting and analysis

◆ **community forums**

- provides lower quality and quantity of information
- helps library staff develop rapport with community
- incurs medium cost in staff time for presenting and analysis

◆ **community written survey**

- easier to ask complex questions
- provides library visibility
- incurs high cost in development, production, distribution and analysis

◆ **user written survey**

- easier to ask complex questions
- doesn't reach potential users
- incurs medium cost in development, production and analysis



Sample Process for Community Leader Interview

1. Call to ask community leaders to participate in an interview.

Introduce yourself and explain why you are calling. Ask if this is a convenient time to talk.

Sample explanation: This call is to ask your opinion about how the city of San Mateo can better serve youth in the community. I represent the _____ department; we are gathering ideas and opinions regarding the needs and problems of youth in our community and how they might be solved.

Our goal is: _____ (fill in your specific goal).

You were chosen because you and/or your organization plays an important role in working with youth in our community.

The purpose of the interview is to get your perspective about the problems and needs of youth in our community and your thoughts about how they might be solved.

The interview will be kept confidential; the results of all our interviews will later be combined. No ideas or opinions will be attributed to you. If we feel it would be helpful to attribute something specifically to you, we will contact you and ask your permission.

We estimate the interview will take no longer than 45 minutes.

If you are willing to participate in an interview (face-to-face or by telephone), we will send you a copy of the questions prior to the interview.

Thank you for your time.

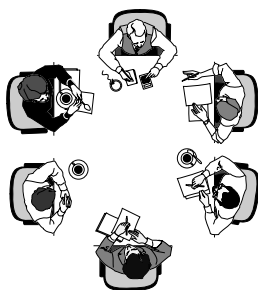
2. Send them a copy of the interview questions.
3. Meet with them or call back at the scheduled time.
4. Ask the interview questions.
5. Thank the person for his/her time and explain how you will keep him/her informed about your progress.



Sample Questions for Community Leader Interview

1. What problems and needs do youth in our community have in their day to day lives?
2. What prevents youth from solving these problems and/or meeting these needs?
3. What kind of help do youth need to solve these problems and/or meet these needs?
4. Are there specific segments of the youth population you believe have special needs or problems?

Who are they?
What are their special problems and/or needs?
What is needed to help them solve these special problems and/or needs?
5. Looking at how the library currently serves youth in our community, what do you feel are its strengths and weaknesses?
6. Who else do you think we should contact to help us serve youth in our community?
7. Is there anything else you would like to say or any questions you would like to ask?



Sample Focus Group Process

Pre-planning

Determine the composition of the focus group (e.g. target group members, key community leaders, service providers). Focus groups are most effective when like participants are brought together.

Identify potential participants.

Make logistical arrangements (confirm location, room set up, translator, equipment, refreshments).

Develop introductory script (introduce your self and your library, explain why you are doing this, explain why you chose them).

Call to invite participants.

Sample Agenda for Hispanic/Latino Community Members

Welcome and introductions (10 min.)

Overview of meeting objectives and process (10 min.)

What type of questions do you need help with in your day-to-day life? (15 min.)

Where do you go to get answers to your questions? (15 min.)

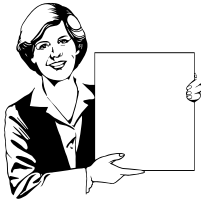
What keeps you from getting answers to your questions? (15 min.)

What comes to mind when you hear the word library? (15 min.)

How does the _____ library help you now? (15 min.)

What else could the _____ library do to help you? (20 min.)

Wrap up and next steps (10 min.)



What do you do with the information you get?

Your objective is to turn the verbal answers you receive into categories which can be summarized to give a picture of the problems and/or needs encountered by the people who live in your library's service area.

Tips for summarizing the responses

- ☛ Try to have the same person summarize all the responses to the same question.
- ☛ Make a list of the responses you receive. Group the responses into general categories. Below is an example of categories for responses to Interview Question #1:
 - money matters
 - consumer issues
 - housing or home care
 - health
 - job-related issues
 - transportation
 - education
 - neighborhood issues
 - recreation, sports or entertainment
 - family relations
 - crime and safety
 - current events and news
 - legal matters
 - child care
 - other
- ☛ Try to create categories that are specific enough so that each response fits in only one category.
- ☛ All those who work on summarizing the responses must have the same understanding of the categories. When in doubt about a category for a specific response, ask for a co-worker's opinion. You may have to go through a trial and error process; however, it will help you get others involved.
- ☛ Often a person will answer a question with several statements. Be sure to put each statement into its appropriate category.
- ☛ There may be a few responses that cannot be put in any of your categories; put them in a category called "other."

What does the information mean?



Questions to use to analyze the responses

What did you see in the results?

What struck you as important?

If resources were no object, what would you do?



Send thank you letters to participants

Send copies of results to participants

Include information about the process and results on the library's website

Develop a schedule/process to keep people involved

About the presenters.....

Gail McGovern specializes in training and consulting with libraries and other non profit organizations. Topics include assessing community needs, building partnerships and community coalitions, fundraising, grantsmanship, long range planning, program planning and evaluation, public relations, serving diverse populations, time management, training trainers, trustee roles and responsibilities, and workshop planning.

Before becoming an independent consultant, Gail was a library development consultant at the California State Library for over 20 years. Gail is the editor of the **CLENEExchange** (newsletter of the CLENE Roundtable of the American Library Association) and writes a monthly column on Internet searching for **Interface** (newsletter of MacNexus, the Sacramento Macintosh Users Group). Her publications include **Program Planning: Tips for Librarians** and **Working With Older Adults**. She is one of the trainers featured in the Library Video Network video, **From the Front of the Room: Trainers Discuss Diversity Training**.

Gail has a Bachelor of Arts degree in religion and Master of Library Science degree, both from Syracuse University. She also has earned certificates in a variety of specialized training areas including cultural diversity, facilitation, fundraising, grantsmanship, nonprofit management, program management, time management, and training techniques.

Yolanda J. Cuesta specializes in helping libraries and other non profit organizations serve ethnic and culturally diverse communities. Training and consulting emphasis include community based needs assessments, building partnerships and community coalitions, marketing and public relations, program planning and evaluation, and grant writing.

Prior to starting her own consulting business, Yolanda was Chief of Library Development Services and Ethnic Services Consultant for the California State Library. She is a member of the American Library Association; the California Library Association; the American Marketing Association; and REFORMA, the National Association to Promote Library Services to the Spanish-Speaking.

Her publications include "From Survival to Sophistication: Hispanic Needs = Library Needs" and "Guidelines for Library Services to the Spanish-Speaking," both published in **Library Journal**.

Yolanda has a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education and a Master of Library Science degree from the University of Texas at Austin. She has pursued additional training in cultural diversity, grantsmanship, program planning and evaluation, and train-the-trainer techniques.

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